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ABSTRACT

This report emphasizes the major organizational and program patterns of the regional education service agencies (RESAs) operating in Georgia, Iowa, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Colorado, Michigan, New York, and Oregon. The State laws governing RESA units and the units' organizational patterns and their programs are described. The problems and issues of existing RESA units are analyzed, and strategies for overcoming the problems are discussed. Empirical research and personal judgments conclude that RESAs can provide local districts with supplemental and support services and can facilitate the development of required programs and services. RESAs can contribute to the equalization of educational opportunities; the interface between urban, suburban, and rural interests; the application of cost benefit/cost effective principles; the development of statewide research and evaluation; and the development of educational change. Through RESAs, local school districts can become involved in statewide and regional planning and decisionmaking. An illustrative inventory of existing RESA programs is appended. (Author/DW)

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Regional Educational Service Agencies

By
E. Robert Stephens

EA 006 647

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CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES v

FOREWORD vii

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED STATEWIDE NETWORKS OF RESA UNITS 6
- Georgia 6
- Iowa 8
- Nebraska 10
- Pennsylvania 12
- Texas 14
- Washington 16
- West Virginia 18
- Wisconsin 20

3. DEVELOPMENT OF RESA UNITS IN STATES HAVING PERMISSIVE LEGISLATION 22
- Colorado 22
- Michigan 24
- New York 26
- Oregon 28

4. MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESA UNITS 31
- The Legislatively Mandated States 32
- The Permissive States 35
- Other Observations 37

5. PROGRAM PATTERNS OF RESA UNITS 39
- The Legislatively Mandated States 39
- General Observations 41

6. PROBLEMS AND ISSUES 43
Political Issues 43
Administrative Issues 44
Program Issues 45

7. STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING THE PROBLEMS AND ISSUES 47
Strategies for the Establishment and Operation of RESA Units 47
Maintenance of Open Systems for Planning and Decision-Making 53

8. CONCLUSION 57

NOTES 59

APPENDIX 64

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

List of Tables

1. Name of Regional Educational Service Agency, Year Established, and Number of Operating Units, by Type of Legislative Framework, January 1975
2. Selected Organizational Characteristics of the Eight Legislatively Mandated Statewide Networks of RESA Units, January 1975
3. Selected Financial Characteristics of the Eight Legislatively Mandated Statewide Networks of RESA Units, January 1975
4. Selected Organizational Characteristics of RESA Units Functioning under Permissive Legislation
5. Selected Financial Characteristics of RESA Units Functioning under Permissive Legislation
6. The Source of Financing and Required Approval of the Annual Administrative and Operational Costs of the Various Types of Programs and Services of RESA Units

List of Figures

1. Statewide and Partial Statewide Network of Regional Educational Service Agencies, January 1975
2. Boundaries of Georgia Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, January 1975
3. Boundaries of Iowa Area Education Agencies, January 1975
4. Boundaries of Nebraska Educational Service Units, January 1975
5. Boundaries of Pennsylvania Intermediate Units, January 1975
6. Boundaries of Texas Educational Service Centers, January 1975
7. Boundaries of Washington Intermediate School Districts, January 1975
8. Boundaries of West Virginia Regional Educational Service Agencies, January 1975
9. Boundaries of Wisconsin Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, January 1975
10. Approximate Boundaries of Colorado Boards of Cooperative Services, January 1975
11. Boundaries of Michigan Intermediate School Districts, January 1975
12. Approximate Boundaries of New York Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, January 1975
13. Approximate Boundaries of Oregon Intermediate Education Districts, January 1975

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FOREWORD

Regional Educational Service Agencies is the second in a series of *ERS Monographs* designed to bring school administrators and others the experience, views, and thinking of noted authorities with regard to current issues, problems, and practices in school administration. Unlike other ERS publications that are limited to the presentation of facts and objective analyses of *what is*, the monograph series is designed to include each author's views about *what should be*.

This monograph was prepared through a cooperative arrangement between ERS and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. Under this arrangement, the Clearinghouse commissioned the author and edited the manuscript for style. ERS selected the topic and the author and was responsible for the publication and distribution of the monograph.

E. Robert Stephens was selected to prepare this monograph because of his practical experience and academic interest in regional educational service agencies. Dr. Stephens is chairman of the Department of Administration, Supervision, and Curriculum at the University of Maryland. In addition to 12 years of teaching and administrative experience in Iowa public schools, he has been a university professor (University of Iowa 1966-72; University of Maryland 1972-present) and has been involved in several regional and multicounty studies, including:

- "A Study of the Multi-County Regional Educational Service Agency" (funded by the U.S. Office of Education, 1967-68)
- "An Exploratory Investigation of Cooperative Programs and Services between Central City and Other Metropolitan Areas in Selected Metropolitan Areas" (sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators, 1969)
- "A Study of the Multiple Use of Public Facilities" (funded by the Iowa State Office of Planning and Programming, 1971)

- "Exploratory Feasibility Study of the Regional Service Agency Concept in Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Areas of the State of Maryland" (funded by the Governor's Commission on the Structure and Governance of Education in Maryland, 1973-74)

Additionally, Dr. Stephens' writings on the topic of regional educational service agencies have been published in various state and national publications. His paper titled "Regional Approach to Programs" is a major section of the chapter on rural education appearing in the 1971 edition of *The Encyclopedia of Education*. Moreover, through extensive consultations with personnel in various regional educational service agencies throughout the nation, Dr. Stephens has further enhanced his expertise in this field.

For describing the major aspects of regional educational service agencies and for suggesting from his experience strategies that he believes would be helpful in establishing or improving RESA units, both ERS and the Clearinghouse express their appreciation to the author.

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Director of Research
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1

INTRODUCTION

The development of effective and efficient structures for providing educational opportunities to school-age children and youth in state systems of education has for a long time occupied the attention of educational and political planners and decision-makers. Four basic approaches have emerged in several states. These are (1) the formation of larger local school district administrative units, (2) the promotion of cooperative arrangements between two or more local units, (3) the provision of specialized services to local districts by the state education agency, and (4) the formation of special district regional educational service agency (RESA) units.*

Each of the four basic approaches has been in use, either singularly or in combination, in varying degrees in many state school systems. Historically, the first approach (establishment of larger administrative units) has been the most popular. The widespread adoption of this approach contributed to the substantial reduction in the number of local school districts in the nation from 127,649 in 1932 to 17,237 in 1971.[1] The greatest decline in the number of local units occurred early in that period.

*For the purposes of this report, the term "regional educational service agency" (RESA) is employed to describe the emerging service agency. The rationale for the use of the term RESA is that this title appears to have greater conceptual clarity and descriptive validity than do other terms. This is true because these units typically encompass a geographic region, frequently extending beyond the political boundaries of a single county, and they are essentially organizations intended to serve constituent local school districts (rather than agencies designed primarily to perform administrative and regulatory functions for the state education agency as was true of the dominant historical middle-echelon unit—the county school system).

The second most frequently used approach for the improvement of local district operations has been the creation of some type of formalized regional educational service agency for the purpose of providing specialized programs and services to groups of local districts that are unable to have access to such capabilities when acting alone. The use of this option gained momentum in the mid 1960s and remains a strong movement in improving school operations in the United States. The widespread use of this approach is evidenced by the fact that 12 states in the past decade have developed complete or partial statewide networks of regional service units by restructuring former middle-echelon units to make them more service oriented or creating totally new agencies of school government.

Another 12 states have moved in this direction in recent years. That is, educational cooperatives have been developed in portions of many of the member states of the Appalachian Regional Commission, including Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Maryland, and Ohio. In addition, in 1972 Connecticut enacted permissive legislation allowing the formation of what essentially constitute educational cooperatives. In 1973-74, the Minnesota state legislature funded a two-year pilot regional educational service agency in a large multi-county area in the south central region of the state. And, three regional cooperatives have been established in Wyoming.

The concept also has been considered in other states, including South Dakota, North Dakota, Idaho, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, and Massachusetts.

Moreover, since the mid 1960s, still other states having a history of three-echelon school governance have altered the purpose of their existing middle units from a traditional one (providing regulatory or administrative functions for the state education agency, or having a mix of service functions to local school districts and providing regulatory or administrative functions) to one clearly that of a service agency. While several states have moved in this direction, the most significant changes have occurred in California, Illinois, and Ohio.[2] In all three, the existing statewide network of middle-echelon units is the county school system.

Several common patterns of change in each of these states are evident. The most significant of these patterns are as follows:

1. the development of consensus among key elements in the state educational policy-making structure (state legislative and executive branches of government, professional interest groups, and so forth) regarding the need for a new form of delivery system to provide specialized and high-cost educational

programs and services, particularly in the nonmetropolitan areas of the state.

2. the commitment by the state education agency to improve the capabilities of existing middle-echelon units in order that they, in turn, can deliver comprehensive programs and services to their constituent local school districts.

3. the emergence of the county school system as one of the principal administrative agencies for managing the increase in federal educational support during this period, particularly programs emanating from Titles I, II, III, and VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

This report focuses on the major organizational and programming patterns of emerging RESAs in the 12 states that have established either a statewide or a partial system of such units. Two principal reasons account for the selection of the 12 states: (1) the units operate under a relatively clear legislative framework and reflect the implementation of a specific and deliberate state policy to promote the concept, and (2) the units are old enough and sufficiently widespread to permit the observer of school government to draw conclusions concerning dominant organizational and programming patterns.

These 12 states are shown in figure 1. Table 1 lists the official titles of the units, the year of enactment of legislation, and the present number of operating units in each of the states.

FIGURE 1

STATEWIDE AND PARTIAL STATEWIDE NETWORK OF REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES, JANUARY 1975

TABLE 1

NAME OF REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY, YEAR ESTABLISHED, AND NUMBER OF OPERATING UNITS, BY TYPE OF LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK, JANUARY 1975

State	*Year Legislation Enacted*	*Name of Units*	*Number of Units July 1974*
MANDATORY LEGISLATION			
1. Georgia	1972	Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA)	16 (18 planned)
2. Iowa	1974	Area Education Agency (AEA)	15 (effective 7/1/75)
3. Nebraska	1965	Educational Service Unit (ESU)	19
4. Pennsylvania	1971	Intermediate Unit (IU)	29
5. Texas	1967	Educational Service Center (ESC)	20
6. Washington	1969	Intermediate School District (ISD)	12
7. West Virginia	1972	Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA)	7 (8 planned)
8. Wisconsin	1965	Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA)	19
PERMISSIVE LEGISLATION			
1. Colorado	1965	Boards of Cooperative Services (BOCS)	17
2. Michigan	1962	Intermediate School District (ISD)	58
3. New York	1948	Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)	47
4. Oregon	1963	Intermediate Education District (IED)	29

2

LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED STATEWIDE NETWORKS OF RESA UNITS

As of January 1975, statewide systems of regional educational service agencies had been established by statute in eight states: Georgia, Iowa, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. A profile of each of these statewide RESA systems follows. In each profile, attention is given to the following characteristics: legislative framework, governance and administration, financial support base, and major programming features.

GEORGIA

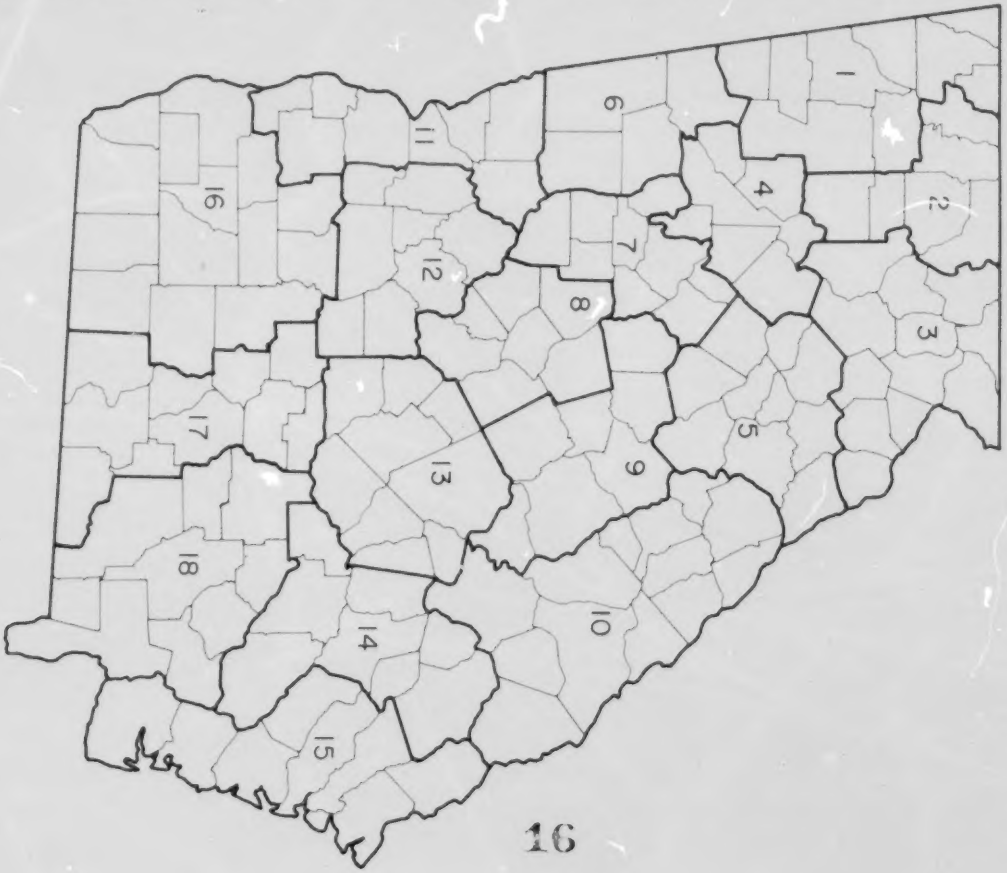
Georgia[3] established a statewide network of Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) by statutory enactment in 1972. The State Board of Education, which was given relatively broad authority over the units, approved 18 CESAs in January 1972. The historical precedent for the new units was a system of "shared services programs" generally developed sporadically by local school districts in the state in the years immediately prior to enactment of the new legislation.

In the 1972-73 school year, 13 CESAs were in operation. This number increased to 16 the following year. The geographic location of the units is shown in figure 2.

At least four local school districts in each of the operating CESAs requested state approval to form the unit, as required by statute. Once established, all local school districts in a CESA are eligible for membership. Participation is voluntary, however. As established in the legislation, the geographic boundaries of the CESAs must conform to the districts established in 1971 by the State Planning and Community

FIGURE 2

BOUNDARIES OF GEORGIA COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES, JANUARY 1975



Affairs Policy Board for the purpose of administering and planning state and federal programs.

The units are governed by the Board of Control, composed of one representative from each participating member local school district. The local governing board may designate a board member or its chief administrative officer to represent the district on the Board of Control. The chief administrative officer of each CESA, the director, is approved by the Board of Control and serves as its secretary.

CESAs are provided earmarked appropriations from the state. Their principal source of financial support is derived, however, from service contracts with participating local school districts. The units are also eligible to receive federal and private monies. They do not have fiscal taxing authority nor are they permitted to hold title to real property.

The principal programming features of the 13 units in operation in 1972-73 were the following: (1) programs and services for exceptional children (for example, psychological services, and classes for the educable mentally retarded, the trainable mentally retarded, and the deaf and hard-of-hearing), (2) subject matter consultant services, and (3) vocational-technical education.

Essential statewide planning and monitoring of CESA operations are promoted by the designation of the Office of School Administrative Services as the principal administrative unit responsible for the new regional educational service agencies.

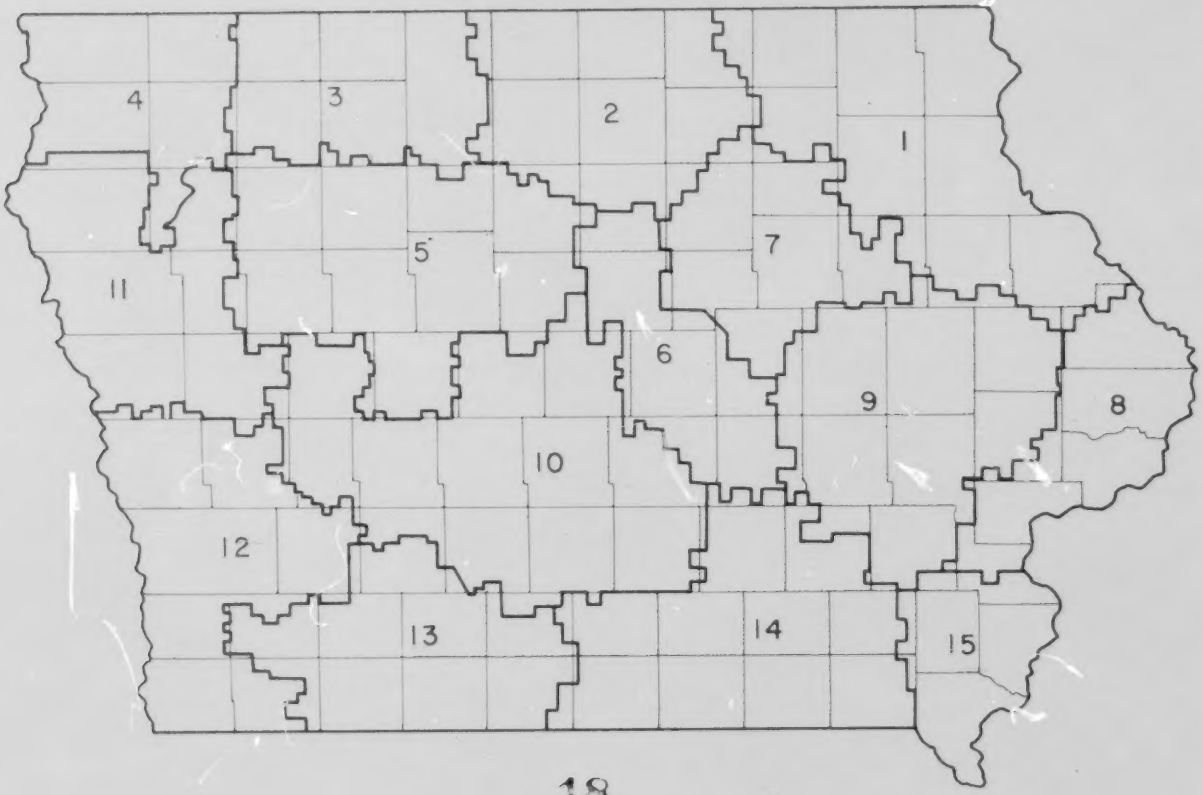
IOWA

Iowa[4] utilized permissive legislation before adopting the mandatory approach to establish its new statewide system of regional educational service agencies. In 1965, the state enacted legislation allowing two or more adjacent county school systems to merge by concurrent action of county boards of education. Passage of this legislation made possible the formation of multicounty RESAs, known legally as Joint County School Systems.

During the 1973-74 school year, 10 Joint County School Systems were in operation, embracing 30 of the state's former 99 single-county units. In the 1974 legislative session, the General Assembly of Iowa enacted mandatory legislation creating a statewide network of 15 Area Education Agencies (AEAs), effective July 1, 1975. This legislation also abolished the two types of former middle-echelon units. The new AEAs will be geographically coterminous with the state's 15 area community college or area vocational-technical districts formed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The boundaries of the units are shown in figure 3.

FIGURE 3

BOUNDARIES OF IOWA AREA EDUCATION AGENCIES, JANUARY 1975



The new AEAs are to be governed by a nine-member board elected by members of the boards of directors of constituent local school districts. The governing board has the authority to appoint its chief administrative officer.

The new units are required to provide programs and services for exceptional children and media services for their member local school districts. Additionally, they may provide staff development programs, educational data processing services, and research and planning programs and services, provided that these are requested by member local districts. They also will perform a number of administrative and data-gathering functions for the state education agency, as was true of their predecessors.

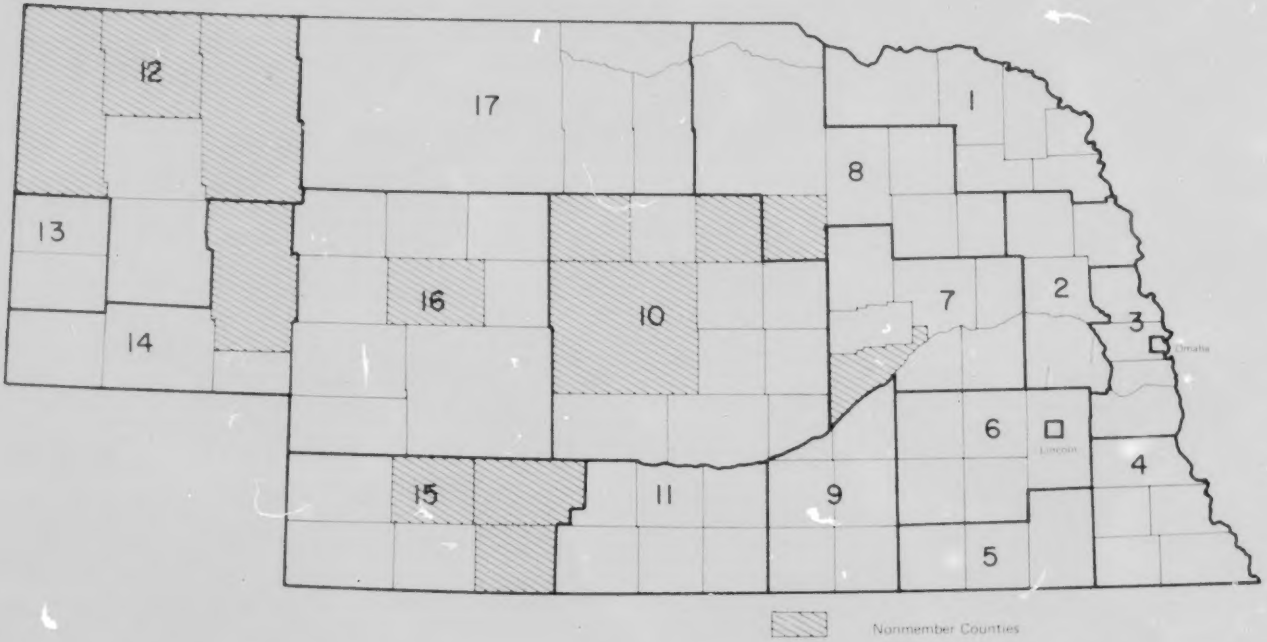
The funding arrangements of the new AEAs potentially represent a relatively major change in the financing of elementary-secondary education in the state. Under the new legislation, local school districts will pay for the services received from the AEA. Each school district may add to its annual allowable growth in expenditures an amount equal to the cost per pupil in the AEA for special education support services provided by the regional unit. And it may also add to its annual allowable growth the amount of $5 per pupil for media services secured from the service unit. The costs of all other services provided by the AEA cannot exceed $10 per pupil in allowable annual growth. The new AEAs may also receive and expend federal monies.

NEBRASKA

The Nebraska[5] legislature mandated a statewide system of 19 Educational Service Units (ESUs) in 1965. The units were designed primarily to provide supplemental educational services to local school districts. All school districts were placed in an ESU in the initial legislation. However, a provision of the 1965 legislation permits any county to withdraw from the ESU if petitioned by at least 5 percent of the legal voters in three-fifths of the local school districts in the county and if the issue receives a majority vote in the following general election.

Between 1965 and 1972, 19 counties—a majority of them in the less-sparsely populated central and western regions of the state—were subsequently removed from an ESU. As a result, in 1972, the state, while still technically having a statewide network of ESUs, had only 17 operating units. In 1973, the Nebraska legislature required that the Omaha and Lincoln school systems either join their respective ESUs or form separate ESUs. Both chose the latter alternative. Thus, in July 1973, the state again had 19 regional ESUs embracing all but 13 of the state's 93 counties. The geographic boundaries of the units are shown in figure 4.

FIGURE 4
BOUNDARIES OF NEBRASKA EDUCATIONAL SERVICE UNITS, JANUARY 1975



The ESUs are governed by a popularly elected board. Each member county is allowed one representative, and four members are elected at-large. The governing board appoints its chief administrative officer.

ESUs are authorized to levy a property tax not to exceed one mill. The majority of the units, however, derive their financial support from contractual service agreements with constituent local school districts and from federal monies. The ESUs may acquire and hold title to real property.

The dominant programming thrusts of Nebraska's ESUs are (1) programs and services for exceptional children, (2) subject matter consultant services, and (3) administrative programs and services.

PENNSYLVANIA

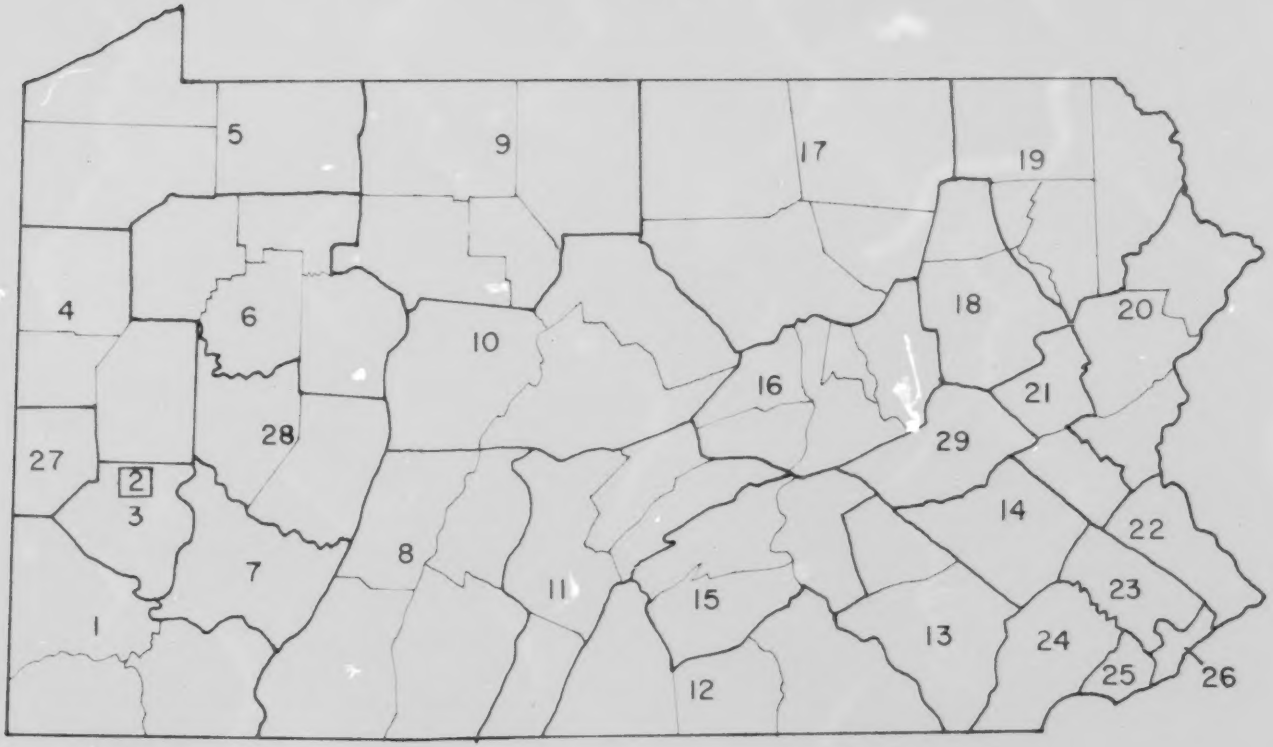
In 1970, the Pennsylvania[6] legislature simultaneously dissolved the offices of the county superintendent of schools and county board of directors and enacted legislation creating a statewide network of 29 Intermediate Units (IUs). The geographic boundaries of the IUs are shown in figure 5. All local school districts in the state are included in an IU, though participation in IU programming is voluntary.

The board of directors of the IUs consists of 13 members elected from the directors of the constituent local school districts. The board of directors appoints the chief administrative officer of the unit (the executive director). Each IU has a mandatorily required IU council composed of all chief administrative officers of the constituent local districts. This body serves in an advisory capacity to the IU.

IUs receive state appropriations computed on the basis of a weighted formula that includes an enrollment factor and a real value factor. Local school districts also can be assessed a general fee for the IU's operating budget. IUs also make extensive use of service contracts and are generally the recipients of substantial federal monies. The units have no taxing authority, nor may they hold title to real property.

Virtually every conceivable program offered by a RESA unit anywhere in the nation is offered by one or more of Pennsylvania's IUs, particularly by the comprehensive units serving the metropolitan Philadelphia and Pittsburgh regions. The dominant programming features of the IUs throughout the state are (1) vocational-technical education, (2) data processing services, (3) educational media programs and services, (4) comprehensive programs and services for exceptional children, (5) subject matter consultant services, and (6) research and evaluation services.

FIGURE 5
BOUNDARIES OF PENNSYLVANIA INTERMEDIATE UNITS, JANUARY 1975



TEXAS

In 1965, the Texas[7] legislature authorized the State Board of Education to establish a comprehensive statewide system of instructional media centers by September 1967. This action occurred almost simultaneously with the passage of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. One principal feature of the latter legislation was the promotion of exemplary education programs in each of the states through the earmarking of funds (through Title III of the act) for the establishment of supplementary education centers in the states.

In 1967, the Texas legislature expanded the potential scope of programs and services that might be offered by the instructional media centers. Subsequently, the State Board of Education established a statewide network of 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs). The geographic boundaries of the ESCs are shown in figure 6. All local school districts are members of an ESC. Participation in programs offered by an ESC, however, is voluntary.

Units are governed by a five- or seven-member board of directors elected by a joint committee selected by each local district and four-year institution of higher education located within the ESC. The board of control appoints its chief administrative officer, the executive director.

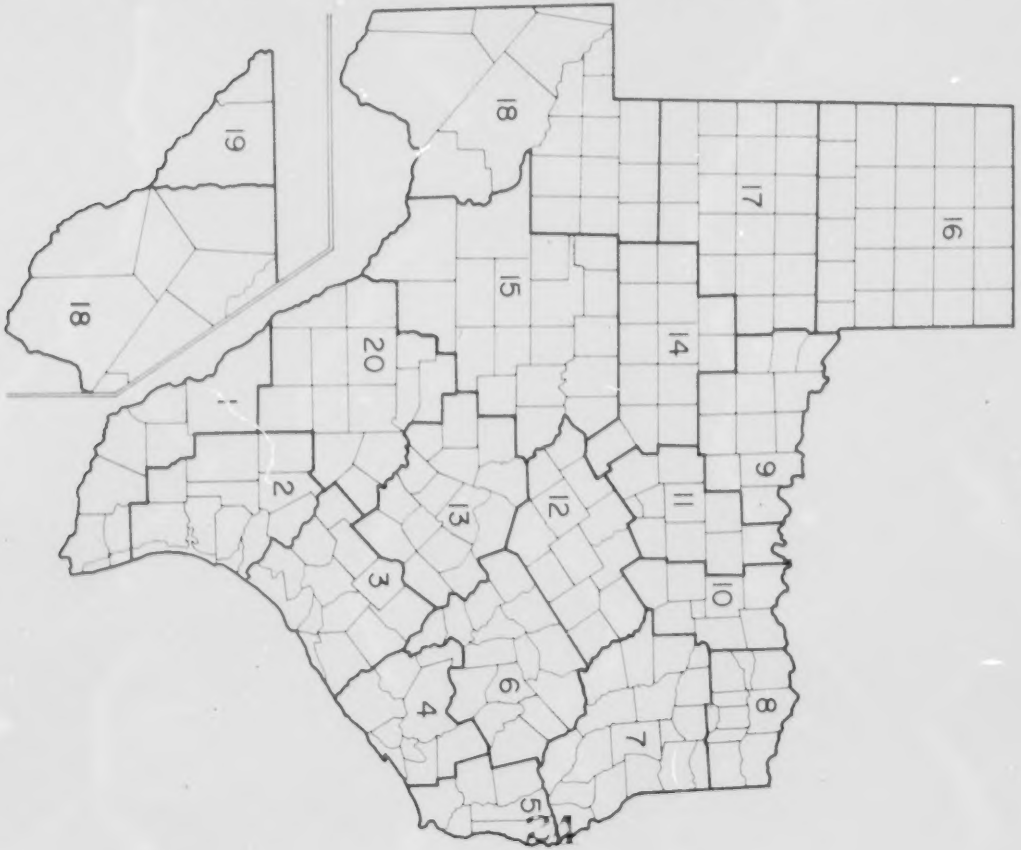
ESCs are financed by both public and private sources. Funds for instructional media services, which are common in all the units, are provided on a matching basis through local school district service contracts and state appropriations. State appropriations also are available for data processing services offered throughout the network. The remaining principal sources of monies are derived from service contracts and federal monies. The units do not have taxing authority; however, they may hold title to real property.

The principal programming thrusts of the ESCs are (1) comprehensive instructional media services (for example, film library, duplication services, tape library, consultant services, inservice programs), (2) comprehensive computer services (for example, scheduling, test scoring, grade reporting, payroll and records), (3) subject matter consultant services, (4) comprehensive programs and services for exceptional children, (5) migrant education, (6) driver education, (7) drug abuse and crime prevention programs, and (8) comprehensive regional planning and evaluation services.

One feature of the Texas arrangement is the elaborate system designed to promote state education agency planning and communication with the 20 ESC units and vertically and horizontally with other educational delivery systems in the state. Exemplary among the many features of this scheme are the following:

FIGURE 6

BOUNDARIES OF TEXAS EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTERS, JANUARY 1975



1. The designation of a major component of the state education agency as the principal unit for the planning and operation of ESCs, not only to promote internal coordination within the agency but also to contribute to horizontal coordination with other units of state government
2. The use of a joint committee in each ESC, composed of representatives of local school districts and four-year institutions, which promotes direct two-way communication between the major elements of the educational delivery systems in the region
3. The use by the state education agency of a Statewide Advisory Commission on Education Service Centers, composed of the chairman of each board of directors, which also contributes significantly to the establishment of a platform for joint planning and communication
4. The use by the state education agency of a statewide Planning Council composed of the executive directors of each of the ESCs

WASHINGTON

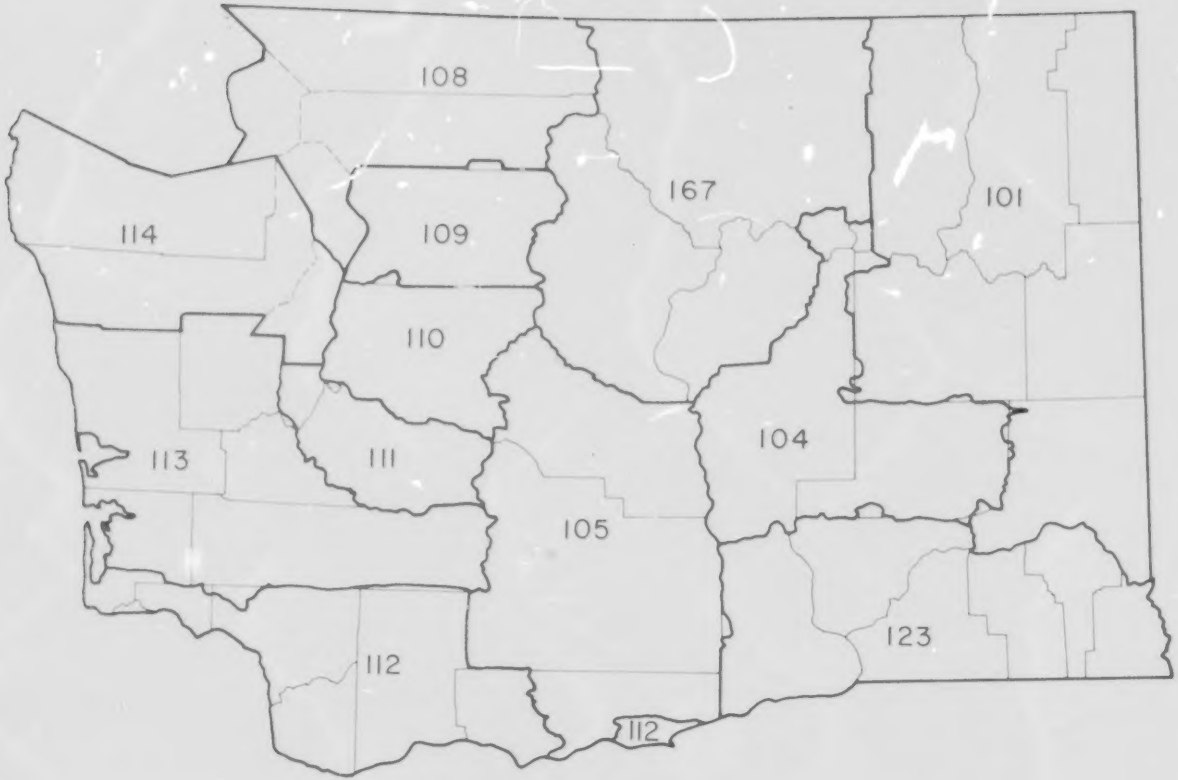
In 1965, Washington[8] enacted permissive legislation allowing for the formulation of multicounty RESAs to replace the state's 39 county offices. By 1969, the state legislature mandated the formation of a statewide network of 14 Intermediate School Districts (ISDs); by 1972, all 14 were operative. In 1973, two mergers of ISDs were approved by the State Board of Education. Thus, the present statewide network consists of 12 ISDs. The geographic boundaries of the units are shown in figure 7.

A popularly elected seven-member board serves as the governing unit of each ISD. By resolution, the board may increase its size to nine members. The board is responsible for the selection of its chief administrative officer. ISDs derive their financial support from four main sources: service contracts with constituent local school districts, county appropriations, state appropriations, and federal grants. The units do not have taxing authority, nor do they enjoy fiscal independence in that their budgets are subject to review by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. ISDs may hold title to real property.

The major programming thrusts of the ISDs in Washington are (1) comprehensive administrative services (for example, data processing, legal consultant services, financial consultant services), (2) staff

FIGURE 7

BOUNDARIES OF WASHINGTON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS, JANUARY 1975



development services, (3) educational media services, and (4) comprehensive administrative and regulatory services for the state education agency (for example, enforcement of compulsory attendance laws, apportionment of state monies to local school districts).

WEST VIRGINIA

In 1972, the West Virginia[9] legislature authorized the State Board of Education to establish multicounty RESAs for the purpose of providing educational programs and services to local school districts. The state board was also authorized to adopt policies, rules, and regulations for the operation of RESAs. Subsequently, the state established a statewide network of eight units. In September 1973, five of the proposed units were organized. Two additional units began operation during the 1974-75 year. The geographic boundaries of the RESAs are shown in figure 8.

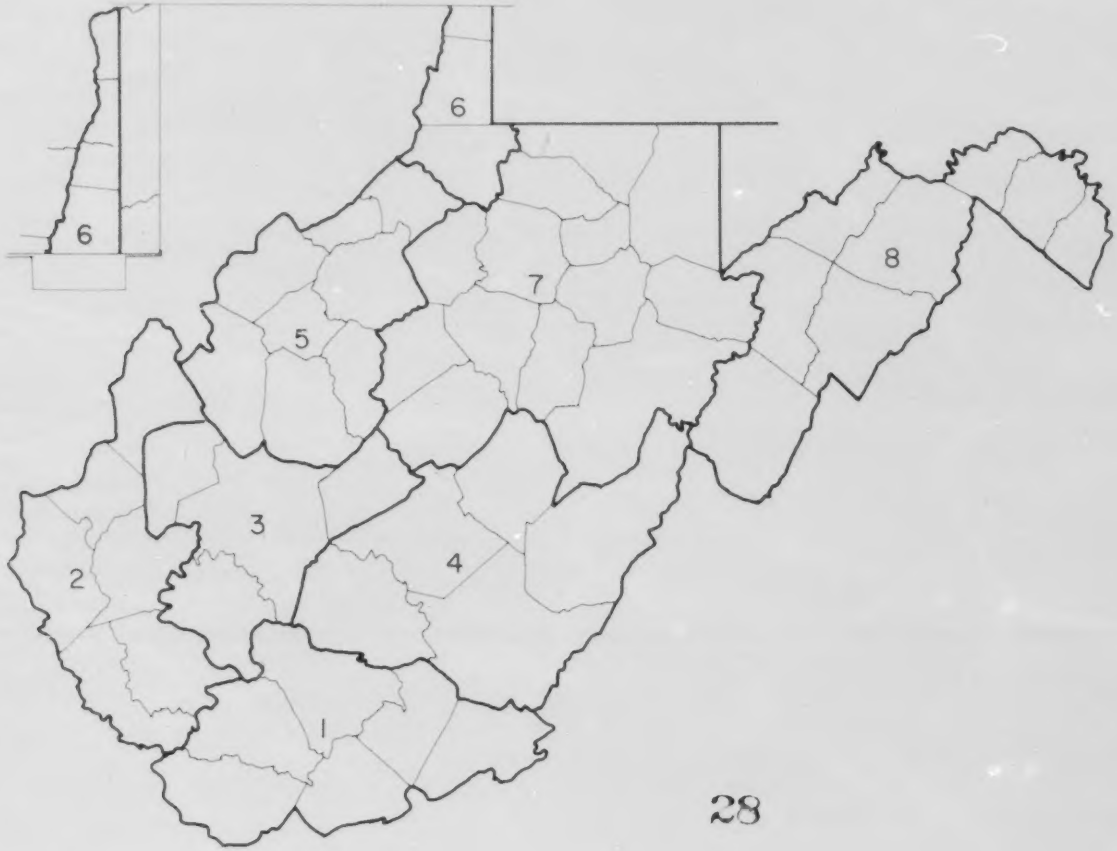
The RESA units are governed by a board having two representatives from each member local school district, the superintendent of schools, and one member of the governing board. In addition, one voting member appointed by the State Superintendent of Schools serves on the RESA governing board. The RESA unit also may choose to permit representatives of participating noneducational agencies to be either voting or nonvoting members of its board, or it may establish functional advisory councils having representation from both educational and noneducational agencies. The governing board has authority to appoint its chief administrative official, the executive director.

The units are financed from a variety of sources. While they have no taxing authority, they do receive state appropriations and are eligible to receive federal monies. In addition, they can enter into service contracts with constituent local school districts. As established by state policy, the fiscal agent for the RESA is one of the participating local school districts.

The parameters of the major programming missions of the developing RESA units also are established by state policy. These missions include (1) administrative services (for example, educational planning, cooperative purchasing, computer services), (2) curricular services (such as subject matter consultants, auxiliary personnel, demonstration services), (3) media services (regional film library, educational and public television, audiovisual production and utilization, and so forth), and (4) instructional services (for example, psychological services, and diagnostic services and programs for exceptional children).

FIGURE 8

BOUNDARIES OF WEST VIRGINIA REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES, JANUARY 1975



WISCONSIN

The county education unit in Wisconsin[10] came under regular and intensive study during the 15-year period from 1950 to 1965. In 1963, the state legislature chartered a commission to organize all areas of the state in cooperative educational service agencies by 1965 and to abolish the office of county superintendent of schools. A statewide network of 19 Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) was subsequently established on July 1, 1965. The geographic boundaries of the units are shown in figure 9. All school districts in the state are automatically members of a CESA although participation in programs and services is voluntary.

Each agency is governed by a board of control composed of representatives of constituent local school district boards of education. The board has authority to appoint its chief administrative officer, the agency coordinator.

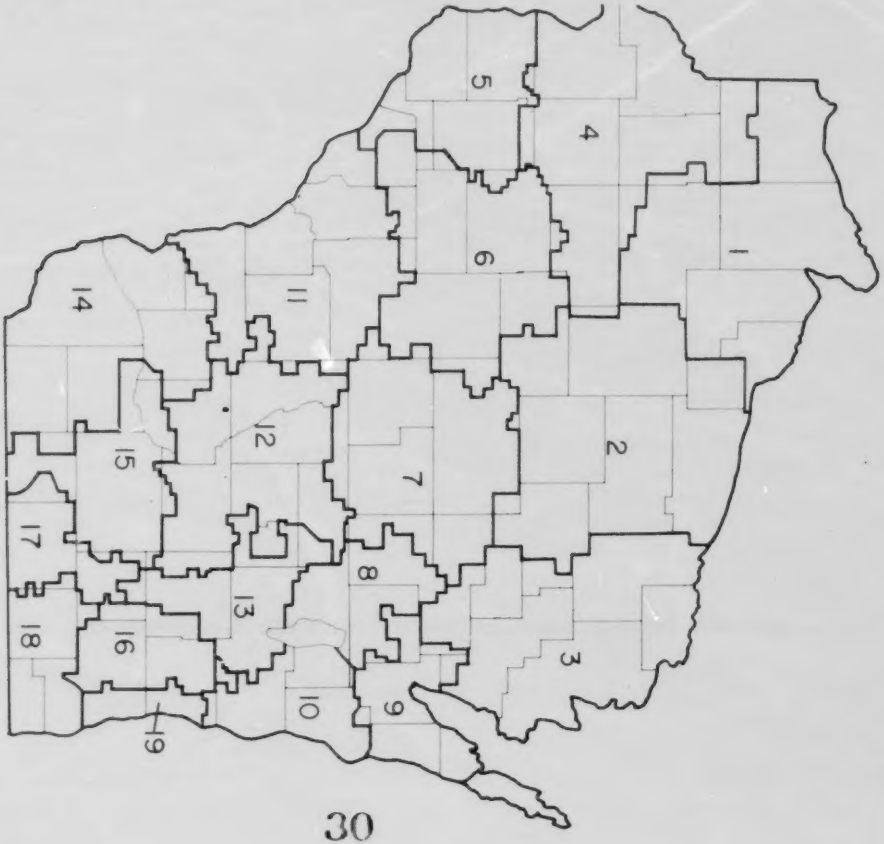
CESAs have no taxing authority. They receive minimal state support, in 1973-74 amounting to $34,000 annually for administrative costs of the agency. Their primary sources of financial support are service contracts with participating local school districts and federal monies. They are excluded from ownership of real property.

The major programming patterns of Wisconsin's CESAs tend to follow those of regional operations in other statewide systems. There is a heavy commitment for the provision of special education programs and services, curriculum consultant services, educational media services, and data processing.

Another, though unusual, function performed by all Wisconsin CESAs is their statutorily mandated charge to appoint an Agency School Committee. The primary responsibility of this unit is the study and evaluation of existing local school district structures. In the event the Agency School Committee finds structural limitations in local school districts, it is responsible for proposing organizational modifications.

FIGURE 9

BOUNDARIES OF WISCONSIN COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES, JANUARY 1975



3

DEVELOPMENT OF RESA UNITS IN STATES HAVING PERMISSIVE LEGISLATION

As of January 1975, the regional educational service agency concept was partially implemented on a statewide basis in Colorado, Michigan, New York, and Oregon. A brief profile of the four partial statewide RESA systems follows. In the profile emphasis is given to the following characteristics: legislative framework, governance and administration, financial support base, and major programming features.

COLORADO

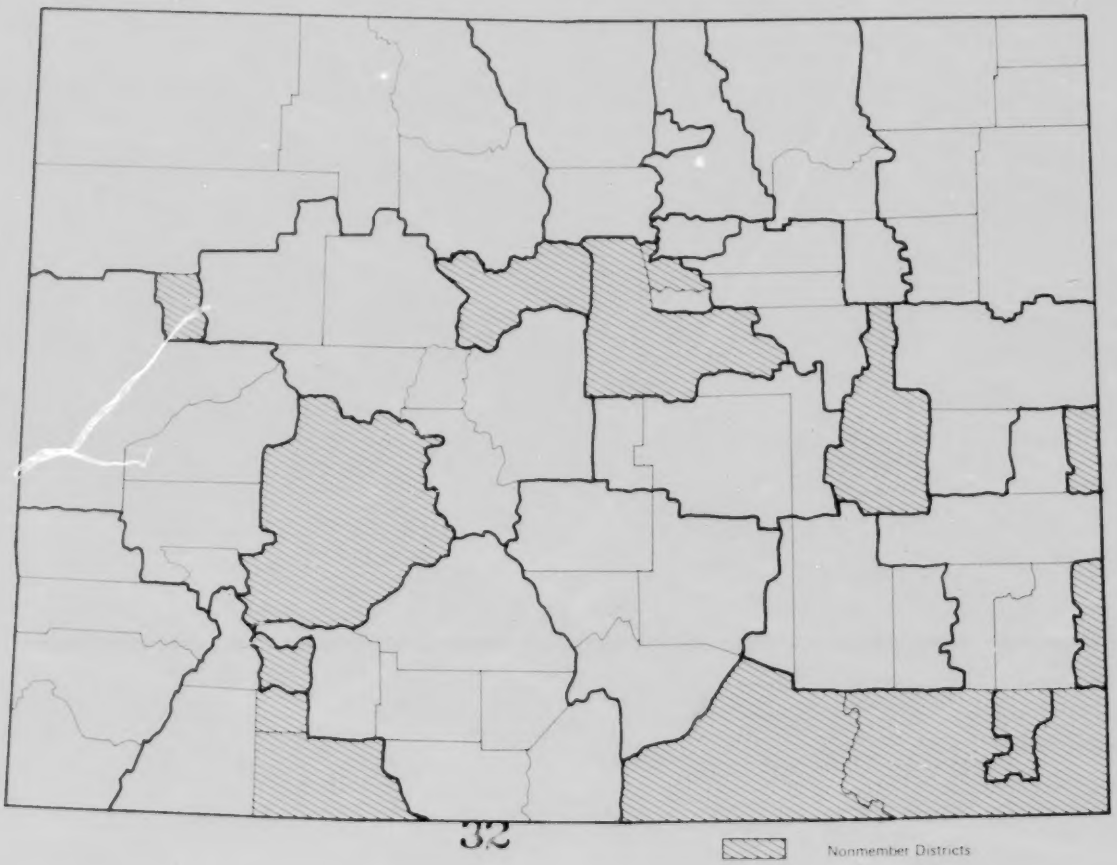
In 1965, the Colorado[11] legislature enacted permissive legislation allowing two or more local school districts to form Boards of Cooperative Services (BOCSs). Since 1965 the growth of BOCSs has been substantial, resulting in a near-statewide system of 17 BOCSs in operation in July 1974. In 1973-74, all but 19 of the state's 181 local school districts were members of a BOCS. The geographic boundaries of the Colorado BOCSs are shown in figure 10.

In addition to local school districts, BOCSs may now include community and technical colleges, junior college districts, and other state-supported institutions of higher learning. This amendment to the original 1965 legislation was enacted in 1973. Two other significant amendments passed in 1973 provided that only the 17 multipurpose BOCSs in operation in the 1972-73 school year would be eligible for a newly authorized state appropriation and required that BOCSs serve school districts having a minimum of at least 4,000 students in grades K-12, inclusive.

BOCSs are governed by a board composed of members appointed by constituent local school district boards of education. The governing

FIGURE 10

APPROXIMATE BOUNDARIES OF COLORADO BOARDS OF COOPERATIVE SERVICES, JANUARY 1975



boards must have at least five members; each participating local school district must have a minimum of one representative. The governing boards of the units have authority to appoint their chief administrative officer.

The BOCSs do not have taxing authority. They are eligible, however, to receive state appropriations. The bulk of their financial resources are derived from service contracts with participating institutions. Many of the units also are deeply engaged in the administration of federal programs. The units are eligible to hold title to real property.

The principal programming thrusts of Colorado's BOCSs are (1) staff development programs for teachers, administrators, and support service personnel, (2) programs and services for exceptional children, (3) administrative services (for example, teacher recruitment, cooperative purchasing), and (4) educational media programs and services.

The rapid growth of BOCSs in Colorado is due in large measure to the commitment of the state education agency to promote this concept as a viable approach for the improvement of educational opportunities of children and youth, particularly those residing in nonmetropolitan areas. Perhaps the greatest evidence of this commitment is the designation and assignment of key staff of the agency to promote the development of BOCSs and monitor their administration and operation.

MICHIGAN

In 1962, the Michigan[12] legislature eliminated all single-county school systems and established in their place Intermediate School Districts (ISDs). The new ISDs had the same rights and responsibilities of the former county units but were charged with additional programming functions, notably the provision of special education and vocational-technical education services to local school districts.

The new legislation, which became effective in 1963, mandated that all new ISDs must have a minimum enrollment of 5,000 students. As a result of this requirement and some voluntary mergers of ISDs, the state in 1973 had 15 multicounty ISDs. Nine of the fifteen were two-county in region; four were three-county; one embraced a four-county region; and one comprised a five-county region. The remaining ISDs in Michigan were single-county units. The geographic boundaries of the ISDs are shown in figure 11.

The ISDs are governed by a popularly elected board. The board has the authority to appoint its chief administrative officer. The units have limited categorical fiscal authority to levy taxes for special education and vocational-technical education. They receive state appropriations, and the majority administer extensive federal programs.

FIGURE 11

BOUNDARIES OF MICHIGAN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS, JANUARY 1975

The dominant programming thrusts of Michigan's ISDs are (1) comprehensive programs and services for exceptional children, (2) comprehensive vocational-technical programs, (3) subject matter curriculum consultant services, (4) data processing services, and (5) educational media programs and consultant services.

The ISDs also perform numerous regulatory and administrative functions for the state education agency such as the enforcement of financial accounting and auditing arrangements governing local school district operation, the enforcement of compulsory attendance laws, and planning for school district reorganization.

NEW YORK

New York[13] Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCESs) were established in 1948. By July 1974, 47 units were in operation. Local school district membership in a BOCES is voluntary. All but 17 of the state's local education agencies (exclusive of the five largest urban school systems that are statutorily denied membership) presently belong to a BOCES. Thus, as shown in figure 12, the state virtually has a statewide network of regional educational service agencies. Unlike a majority of other statewide systems, however, the New York State system does not tend to adhere closely to the political boundaries of the county units of government.

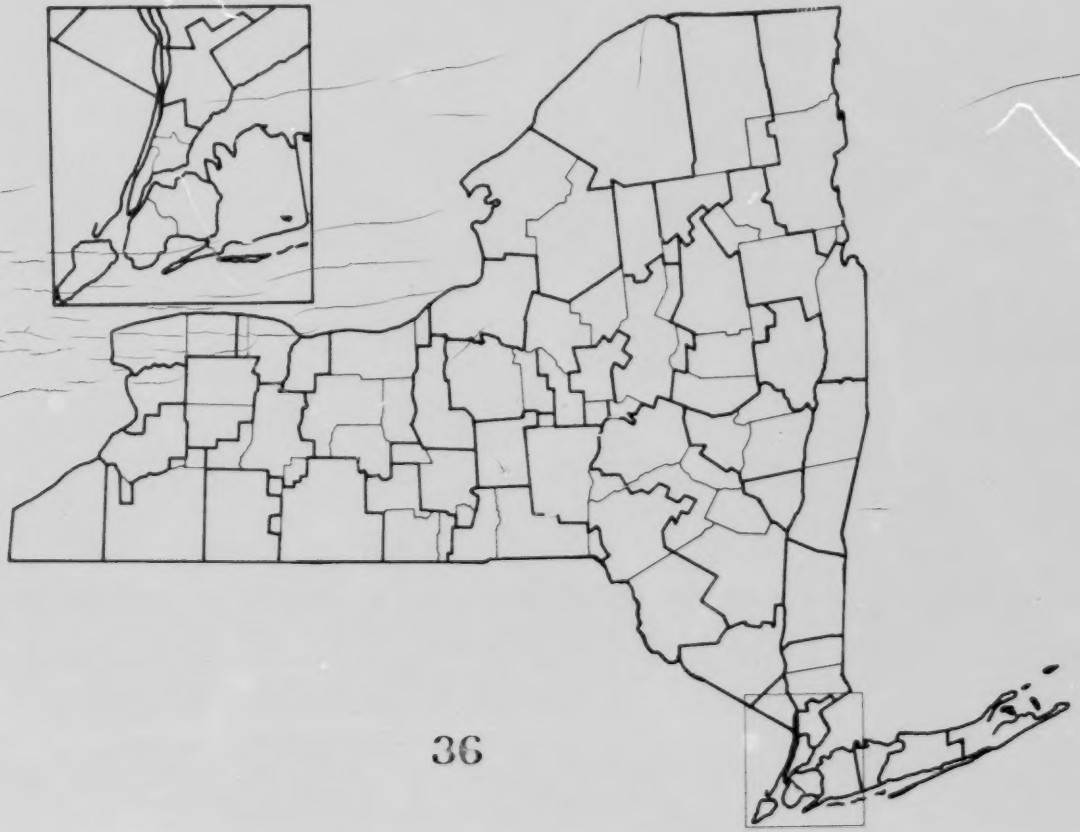
The units are governed by a five- to nine-member board elected by the boards of local school districts at an annual convention. The convention is free to elect a member or nonmember of a local district. The governing board has the authority to appoint its chief administrative officer, the district superintendent, subject to the approval of the state Commissioner of Education. The district superintendent is legally and operationally defined as a state officer.

BOCESs, which have no taxing authority, are financed from a variety of sources. State appropriations for special shared services provide operating monies. Service contracts with local school districts also constitute a significant base of support. In addition, each local school district is assessed a pro rata amount to cover the administrative costs of its BOCES. Virtually all BOCESs typically receive additional financial support as a result of federal projects administered by the units. BOCESs can hold title to real property and are permitted to construct physical facilities subject to prior approval by public referendum.

BOCESs may offer relatively unlimited programs and services to their constituent districts provided that the service is requested by at least two member systems and approval is granted from the state education agency. Local school district participation is on a voluntary basis.

FIGURE 12

APPROXIMATE BOUNDARIES OF NEW YORK BOARDS OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, JANUARY 1975



The programming thrusts of BOCESs are

1. statewide itinerant teacher services (for example, music, art, driver education, reading)
2. comprehensive programs and services for exceptional children (for example, gifted, speech and hearing correction, emotionally disturbed, physically handicapped, mentally handicapped)
3. pupil personnel programs and services (for example, guidance and counseling, dental hygiene, psychological and psychiatric services)
4. comprehensive administrative and management programs and services (for example, data processing, planning and evaluation, research, teacher recruitment and certification)
5. comprehensive vocational-technical programs and services
6. comprehensive educational media services (for example, centralized film libraries, instructional media centers, media consultant services)
7. comprehensive staff development programs

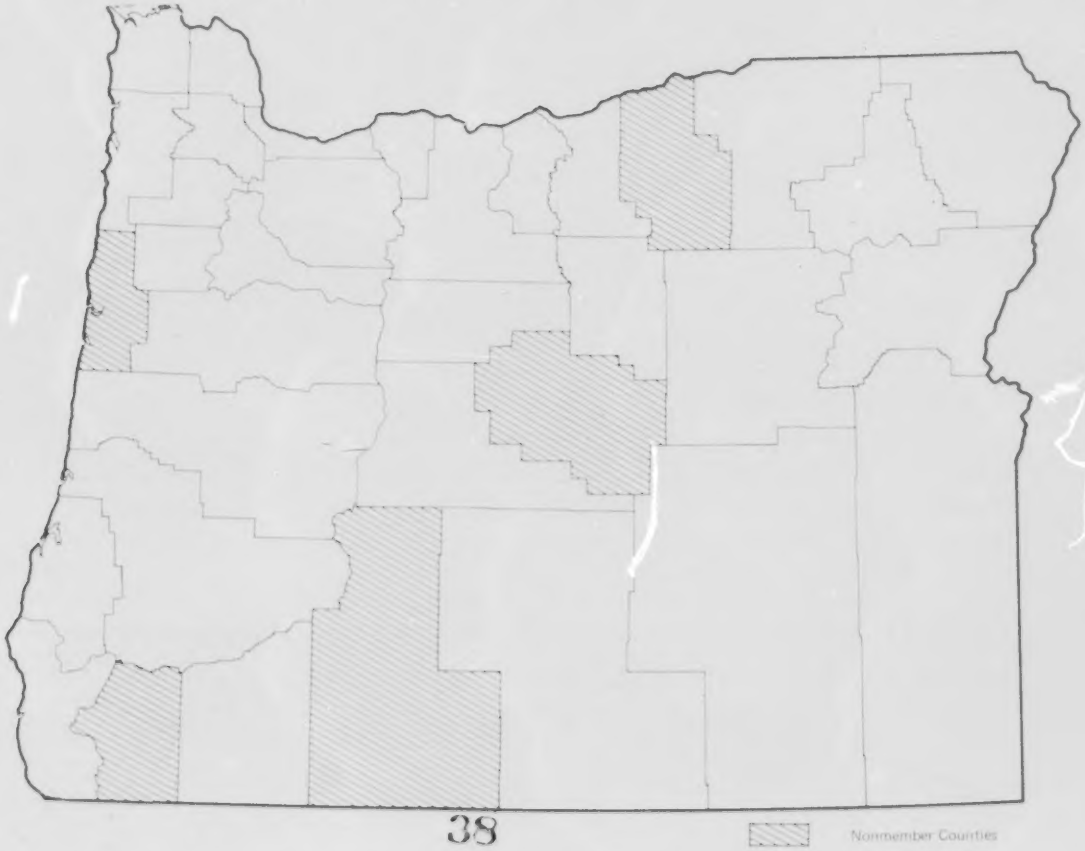
As was true of the regional educational service agency arrangement in Texas, the BOCESs in New York State are linked operationally and administratively to the state education agency, thus promoting statewide planning and communication to virtually all elements of the state school system and state government in general. Moreover, a delicate form of federalism having an elaborate check and balance system has been established between the state education agency, BOCESs, and local districts. Thus, improved planning and implementation of state and regional goals is substantively promoted. This factor has subsequently contributed to the development in New York State of one of the most sophisticated networks of regional educational service units in the nation.

OREGON

In 1963, the Oregon[14] legislature enacted legislation creating a system of Intermediate Education Districts (IEDs). These units replaced the long-established County School Superintendent's Office, created in 1854 in each of the state's 36 counties. In January 1975, 29 IEDs were in operation. These units generally follow county political boundaries except where local school district lines extend to an adjacent county. One of the IEDs (Linn-Benton) is a combination of two former county systems. The geographic boundaries of the 29 operating units are shown in figure 13.

FIGURE 13

APPROXIMATE BOUNDARIES OF OREGON INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION DISTRICTS, JANUARY 1975



The IEDs are governed by a seven-member board chosen by popular election. The governing board, as a corporate body, has many of the same powers as the units it replaced, including the authority to employ its chief administrative officers.

The units are financed from a variety of sources, including direct state appropriations, service contracts with constituent local school districts, local taxing authority, and the administration of federal programs.

The major programming thrusts of the state's IEDs are

1. programs and services for exceptional children
2. curriculum development programs and services
3. inservice programs for certificated and noncertificated personnel
4. media programs and services
5. cooperative purchasing
6. outdoor education programs
7. specialized subject matter consultant services
8. career education programs
9. management support services for local districts
10. a relatively large number of regulatory and administrative functions for the state education agency

4

MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESA UNITS

Certain patterns can be identified in the dominant organizational and financial characteristics of regional educational service agencies. In the following pages, these patterns are delineated for the two major categories of RESAs—those in the eight states that have legislatively mandated a statewide network of units and those in the four states that have enacted enabling legislation allowing their formation. Similarities and differences between RESAs in these two categories are noted.

In the analysis, eight organizational characteristics are highlighted as follows: (1) minimum or maximum enrollment size specified in legislation, (2) line association with the state education agency, (3) performance of regulatory and administrative functions for the state education agency, (4) required or optional local school district membership, (5) method of selection of governing boards, (6) number of members on governing board, (7) method of selection of chief administrator, and (8) required advisory committee of representatives of local school districts.

Six financial characteristics are also highlighted. These are (1) possession of taxing authority, (2) direct state appropriation, (3) permission to enter into service contracts with local districts, (4) eligibility to receive federal funds, (5) authority to hold title to real property, and (6) required budget review by constituent local districts.

Additional organizational characteristics related to the units' provision of programs and services are highlighted in the following chapter, which focuses on the dominant programming patterns of regional educational service agencies.

THE LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED STATES

Selected organizational characteristics of RESAs in the eight states that have statutorily mandated their establishment are shown in table 2. The dominant organizational patterns of these units are as follows:

1. Five of the eight states have no statutorily specified minimum or maximum enrollment size for their units. In the remaining states, minimums are stated rather than maximums. Further, those minimums that are cited tend to be lower than the consensus view expressed in the literature for the period when the statewide networks were established.

2. While considerable variations exist in all the states, RESA units in all cases clearly have a line association with the state education agency. This association varies from a weak linkage (for example, designation as a corporate body) to a stronger relationship (for example, performance of regulatory functions for the state education agency, program and budget review by the state education agency, receipt of state appropriations).

3. In seven of the eight states (Georgia being the exception) all local school districts located within the geographic boundaries of a RESA unit are legally required to hold membership in the unit. This is not to say, however, that they are required to participate in the programs and services of the agency.

4. A clear pattern exists regarding the selection of the governing boards of regional units. While some variations exist in the specific manner of selection, constituent local school districts play the dominant role in a majority of the states.

5. While the size of membership of the governing boards varies, the dominant pattern emerging is that each constituent local school district has either full or partial representation.

6. Consistent with accepted governance and administrative practice, the chief administrative officials of RESAs in all the states are appointed by the governing boards of the units.

Selected financial characteristics of RESAs operating in the legislatively mandated statewide networks are shown in table 3. A number of critical patterns are evident, as follows:

1. In only one of the states do regional units have the authority to levy taxes for the support of the unit.

TABLE 2

SELECTED ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EIGHT LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED STATEWIDE NETWORKS OF RESA UNITS, JANUARY 1975

Selected Characteristics	Georgia	Iowa*	Nebraska	Pennsylvania	Texas	Washington	West Virginia	Wisconsin
1. Minimum or maximum enrollment size specified in legislation	none	none	none	none	minimum of 50,000 students	minimum of 20,000 students	none	minimum of 25,000 students
2. Line association with state education agency	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
3. Performance of regulatory and administrative functions for state education agency	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
4. All local districts required to be members of RESAs	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
5. Method of selection of governing board	appt. by local district boards	elected by convention of members of local dist. bds.	popular election	elected by convention of members of local dist. bds.	elected by adv. committee of member local dist. bds. & 4-yr. institutions	popular election	appt. by local district boards	appt. by local district boards
6. Number of members on governing board	1 each participating local district	9	1 each member county plus 4 at-large	13 –at least 1 and no more than 1 from ea. local district	5 or 7	7 or 9	2 ea. participating local dist. & 1 mem. appt. by state supt.	1 each member local district
7. Method of selection of chief administrator	appt. by governing board	appt. by governing board	appt. by governing board	appt. by governing board	appt. by governing board	appt. by governing board	appt. by governing board	appt. by governing board
8. Statutorily required advisory committee of representatives of constituent local districts	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes

*Effective July 1, 1975

TABLE 3

SELECTED FINANCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EIGHT LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED STATEWIDE NETWORKS OF RESA UNITS, JANUARY 1975

Selected Characteristics	Georgia	Iowa*	Nebraska	Pennsylvania	Texas	Washington	West Virginia	Wisconsin
1. Possess taxing authority	no	no	yes (one mill limit)	no	no	no	no	no
2. Receive direct state appropriation	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
3. Permission to enter into service contracts with constituent local districts	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
4. Eligible to receive federal grants	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
5. Authority to hold title to real property	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no
6. Statutorily required budget review by constituent local districts	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
*Effective July 1, 1975								

2. The predominant sources of revenue for the agencies in all the states are service contracts with constituent local districts (the major source of revenues), direct state appropriations (typically generating a small percentage of income), and federal program participation (typically a major source of revenue).
3. Regional units in four of the eight states have authority to hold title to real property. Thus, with regard to service agencies, there appears to be no relationship between tax levying authority and permission to hold title to real property, a conventional complementary association in school government generally.
4. A pattern is emerging with regard to the legislative requirement that RESAs establish some form of advisory body representative of constituent local school districts and that the advisory group exercise review authority over the budget and, subsequently, the programs and services of the regional unit.

THE PERMISSIVE STATES

Selected organizational characteristics of RESAs operating under permissive legislation allowing their formation are shown in table 4. The dominant organizational patterns of these units are as follows:

1. While a minimum enrollment is prescribed in two of the four states, the figure cited is considerably less for regional units established under permissive legislation than for those formed by legislative mandate.
2. Organizational patterns of RESAs formed under permissive legislation are similar to those of RESAs formed under mandatory legislation regarding the following key characteristics: the line association with the state education agency, the performance of regulatory functions for the state education agency, the requirement that all local school districts located in the area served by the RESA hold membership in the unit (though participation in the programs and services offered by the units is voluntary), the requirement that local school districts hold the key role in the selection of members of the governing boards of the regional units, and the method of selection of the chief administrative official of the service unit.

TABLE 45

SELECTED ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESA UNITS FUNCTIONING UNDER PERMISSIVE LEGISLATION

Selected Characteristics	Colorado	Michigan	New York	Oregon
1. Minimum or maximum enrollment size specified in legislation	minimum of 4,000 students, K-12, inclusive	minimum of 5,000 students, K-12, inclusive	none	none
2. Line association with state education agency	yes	yes	yes	yes
3. Performance of regulatory and administrative functions for state education agency	no	yes	yes	yes
4. All local districts required to be members	no	yes	yes	yes
5. Method of selection of governing board	appointment by local district boards of education	popular election	election by convention of members of local district boards of education	popular election
6. Number of members of governing boards	1 each participating local district—minimum of 5	5 or 7	5	7
7. Method of selection of chief administrator	appointment by governing board	appointment by governing board	appointment by governing board and approval by state commissioner	appointment by governing board
8. Statutorily required advisory committee of representatives of constituent local districts	no	no	yes	no

Selected financial characteristics of RESAs operating under permissive legislation are shown in table 5. The dominant financial support patterns of these units are as follows:

1. The financial posture of RESA units functioning under permissive legislation is similar to that of their counterparts in the mandated states on three of the four fiscal criteria used in this report. The exception is that two of the four have taxing authority. Similar to mandated units, the majority of permissive RESAs rely heavily on service contracts, federal program administration, and state appropriations for their support base.

2. Differences exist between the two types of units regarding the role of constituent local school districts in the budgetary review process and in the advisory function. Only in New York State is there a requirement that member local education agencies participate in these two roles.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

Two further observations regarding organizational and financial patterns of RESAs can be made. First, the use of mandatory legislation appears to be increasing in recent years. Each of the four states utilizing the permissive option enacted its legislation prior to the end of 1965. Conversely, all eight of the states utilizing the mandatory approach did so since 1965.

Finally, there appears to be some evidence, though meager at present, that the geographic boundaries of regional units coincide approximately with the boundaries established within each state for the administration and operation of other federal and state programs. Georgia and Texas are two examples of this trend.

TABLE 5

SELECTED FINANCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESA UNITS FUNCTIONING UNDER PERMISSIVE LEGISLATION

Selected Characteristics	Colorado	Michigan	New York	Oregon
1. Possess taxing authority	no	yes (categorical)	no	yes
2. Receive direct state appropriation	yes	yes	yes	yes
3. Permission to enter into service contracts with constituent local districts	yes	yes	yes	yes
4. Eligible to receive federal grants	yes	yes	yes	yes
5. Authority to hold title to real property	yes	no	yes	yes
6. Statutorily required budget review by constituent local districts	no	no	yes	no

5

PROGRAM PATTERNS OF RESA UNITS

This chapter focuses on the dominant program patterns of RESAs in the 12 states that have either legislatively mandated a statewide network of units or have enacted enabling legislation allowing their formation. As was true of the description of the dominant organizational and financial characteristics presented in the preceding chapter, the development of regional units in the two types of legislative frameworks is sufficiently old enough and sufficiently widespread to permit programmatic characteristics and trends to be observed by the student of school government.

Little substantive distinction exists between the program patterns of regional units in the eight states operating under statutory mandate and those of RESAs in states functioning under permissive legislative frameworks. For this reason the discussion focuses only on RESAs in the former category.

THE LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED STATES

Legislatures of the eight states that have mandated statewide networks have also prescribed certain programs and services to be provided by the regional units. While relatively extensive in many of the states, these programs and services appear to be confined to the performance of ministerial and administrative functions for the state education agency. Examples of such functions are financial accounting for local school districts, enforcement of compulsory attendance laws, local school district needs assessment, and programs and services for exceptional children. Furthermore, the programming prescriptions that are legislatively established tend to be substantially similar to those

formerly assumed by the middle-echelon unit that the new RESA unit replaced.

A common legislative requirement is that programs and services implemented by RESAs be based on a study of the needs of the constituent local school districts. Representatives of constituent units must be involved in the planning of programs and services or have final review authority on program decisions.

Another common statutory requirement is that the state education agency hold final review over the program practices of RESA units. Also, in the exercise of this authority, the agency must use cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness principles and techniques.

Several programs and services are provided in common by nearly all or a majority of RESAs in the eight states. These programs are similar for RESAs in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan settings and regardless of the source of impetus—legislative mandate or needs of constituent local school districts as perceived by the personnel of the service units, constituent local districts, or the state education agency. The common elements are the following:

1. comprehensive programs and services for exceptional children in virtually all the states
2. comprehensive educational media programs and services in virtually all the units
3. curriculum subject matter consultant services in a majority of the units
4. comprehensive data processing services in many of the units
5. staff development activities in a majority of the units
6. vocational-technical programs and services

An inventory of illustrative programs and services provided by regional units is listed in the Appendix.

Regional units that offer these programs and services also tend to have certain operational features in common. RESAs in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas tend to require a high degree of staff specialization, a high degree of specialization of facilities and equipment, and substantial start-up and operating costs. In the case of programs and services for exceptional children, RESAs also tend to have low student prevalency ratios.

Some clear distinctions are evident, however, in the program patterns of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan RESAs. Whereas the programming missions of regional units serving in nonmetropolitan settings tend

to follow the pattern already described, the programs and services of metropolitan-oriented units are, in addition, highly comprehensive and diverse. Indeed, every conceivable type of educational program is offered somewhere in the nation by one or more metropolitan RESA units. And it is in the nation's metropolitan-oriented RESAs where the greatest sophistication of staffing and operation occurs most regularly (for example, diagnostic learning capabilities, diagnostic and clinical centers for the identification of and programming for severely mentally and physically handicapped children, high quality planning and research and evaluation services).

Finally, a majority of the RESA units regularly have a substantial federal program commitment. In a majority of states, the state education agency has officially or quasi-officially provided incentives for the deep involvement of RESAs in federal programs.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Several other observations regarding program patterns of RESAs of either the mandated or permissive type can also be made. While not widespread, there appear to be increasing program relationships between regional units and institutions of higher education. In Texas, an organizational linkage is required, thus promoting some program planning and operational relationship. In Colorado, selected postsecondary institutions have recently been identified as eligible members of the regional units. The new legislation in Iowa requires that the governing boards of the RESA and the area community college or area vocational-technical school serving the same constituency meet annually to promote coordination and cooperation.

Beyond these developments, regional units appear to be increasingly engaging in voluntary cooperative activity with higher education institutions. The thrusts of these efforts appear to be in the area of joint staffing for curriculum and staff development, the joint operation of educational media services, and joint areawide planning activities.

Also, there appears to be an increasing, though not yet widespread, relationship between regional units and other local and regional governmental subdivisions and private and quasi-private social and welfare agencies. This increasing activity, where it exists, tends to be limited to joint regional planning and regional needs assessments and appears to be a direct outgrowth of the requirement for RESAs and other substate regions to be geographically coterminous.

Several regional units, especially those located in metropolitan settings, appear to be philosophically and operationally committed to the

"spin-off" concept. That is, a deliberate attempt is made by the regional unit to initiate and test a program or service and then to give the management of the activity to the local district once the district possesses both the capability and willingness to continue the activity.

Participation of large urban school districts in the programs and services of metropolitan RESAs appears to be increasing. The impetus for this trend appears to be related to increasing external incentives for participation (particularly state and federal program requirements) and a revived realization of the interrelationship of urban and suburban districts. Whatever its cause, the participation of the central city school district typically is limited to RESA services that have a high degree of specialization of staff and/or facilities and equipment (for example, computer services, educational television).[15]

While the distinction is not always clear, some regional units tend to engage only in those programs and services that are directed toward constituent local school districts as a corporate body. Others have a mix of programs and services for students as well as for the district itself. This distinction, where it exists, does not appear to be based on clear legislative guidelines or on directives of the state education agency. Rather, it appears to be based on the prevailing needs of a particular setting and the traditional relationship between the service unit and its constituency.

6

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Many problems and issues concerning RESAs have emerged in the planning, development, implementation, and operation of such units. In the following pages, the major problems and issues are discussed in three categories: political issues, administrative issues, and program issues. Although many of the problems and issues overlap categories, the use of this scheme is, nonetheless, helpful in both conceptualizing the nature of the issues and in identifying strategies for solving the problems. As will be noted, the prominence of a particular issue, or cluster of issues, varies appreciably among regions, among states, within states, and among local environments—especially between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan settings.

POLITICAL ISSUES

A large number of politically oriented issues have frequently been expressed in the planning, establishment, and operation of RESAs. The method of establishment of RESA units, for instance, is the source of considerable debate. While the legislative mandate approach has been used more frequently in recent years, the permissive approach is generally viewed as more compatible with the American tradition of self-determination and free choice. This issue is even more compounded in the few states presently operating county school systems in which the county superintendency is a constitutionally established office.

Other dimensions of the method-of-establishment issue in states presently operating a form of middle-echelon unit relate to the complex question of how to absorb or accommodate these existing units in a revised structure for the state school system. This issue necessarily is

resolved in the political arena (as are other dimensions of the establishment question).

Another large cluster of politically oriented issues centers around the question of providing a definite and reliable financial base for the proposed or operating regional unit. The chief issues are as follows:

1. Whether the RESAs should have complete or partial fiscal independence (If so, would this lead to unnecessary and wasteful competition between RESAs and local school districts?)
2. Whether state appropriations for regional units would stimulate competition between RESAs and the local school districts for the available financial resources
3. Whether regional units are (or potentially could be) a device for the decentralization of the state education agency (through the establishment of branches of the state agency in regions of the state, thus permitting the closer supervision and monitoring of local school districts)
4. Whether regional units will have the effect of isolating the educational policy-making bodies from the people, and, subsequently, result in less accountability to the people
5. Whether the regional concept is merely a device to save the cities by shifting the deteriorating financial base of the cities to the frequently wealthier suburban regions
6. Whether metropolitan regional units ought to be established primarily to facilitate desegregation of the large urban center
7. Whether the regional concept is a scheme for diluting the political power of the core city

Additionally, in virtually all states there are concerns associated with governmental reform movements generally. Many of these reform efforts center around the promotion of different forms of regionalism (for example, the metropolitan concept, the regional governmental service concept, the special district concept) to replace ineffective and inefficient local and county government and to solve areawide problems regardless of the capability of the existing units of government. The established units tend to perceive the RESA as a threat to the existing structures.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

One of the most perplexing administrative issues is whether regional units, by making specialized programs and services available to small

local school districts in both rural and suburban areas, in effect retard the reorganization of these districts into more viable operations. By improving the quality of the small districts' programming, will RESAs thus remove one of the assumed justifications for reorganization?

Another major concern is that the regional unit in effect creates still another layer of government between the local district and state government, thus hindering vertical communication between these two levels, compounding planning between the two levels, and adding to public confusion and misunderstanding of the workings of government at both levels.

The method of financing RESA units also generates administrative issues in addition to those previously cited as politically oriented. The most perplexing of these have to do with developing equitable formulas for financing regional unit operation. One problem is determining the true wealth of constituent local school districts. Then assessment formulas must be devised for the charging of service fees and administrative costs. Compounding these concerns is the question of voluntary versus required participation and the presence or absence of state allocations to regional units for programming and administrative costs.

The particular relationship between a RESA unit and its constituent districts potentially can generate further administrative issues. Local school districts and the RESA can be in direct competition for the recruitment of specialized personnel and with regard to other aspects of staffing (for example, salaries, fringe benefits, other compensatory and staff development benefits and activities). Potentially more significant is the issue of final determination of the administrative arrangements between the unit and the district and among units in the operation and scheduling of programs and in the use of facilities and personnel.

PROGRAM ISSUES

Another set of issues is associated with the program missions and operations of RESAs. A frequent concern in states where the RESA unit is statutorily or administratively charged with the performance of regulatory and ministerial functions for the state education agency is that potential conflict exists between the service posture and the enforcement posture of the unit. The known or perceived dichotomy between these two roles can create dysfunctions in the program and other relationships between the two units.

Equally significant is the determination of program tasks to be undertaken by the RESA unit. Where arrangements for direct local school district input in program planning and operation are absent or weak,

potential dysfunctions are highly probable, even in situations where program participation is voluntary. Conversely, the heavy reliance on purely voluntary participation tends to place the regional unit in a weak and tenuous planning position.

Other program-related issues center around the question of direct versus indirect services by the regional unit to its constituent local school district and to the students enrolled therein. The parameters of these issues generally are not established by the legislative or administrative charge to RESAs.

7

STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING THE PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Strategies that, in the author's opinion, can substantially help to eliminate or lessen the major political, administrative, and program problems in the establishment and operation of RESA units can be grouped in two clusters. The most significant of these clusters relates to the utilization of appropriate criteria for the establishment and systematic monitoring of a viable structure for the governance, administration, and operation of RESA units. The second cluster of strategies relates to the initiation and maintenance of meaningful and open systems for planning and decision-making.

STRATEGIES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF RESA UNITS

The strategies recommended in this section for the establishment and operation of effective regional educational service agencies are based on judgments that derive from the following factors:

- a review of the literature on all major forms of regionalism in education
- an extended study of different forms of regionalism in education as it is developing in the several states, and onsite visitations and examinations of numerous operating units throughout the nation
- the application of selected administrative theories and principles of organizational development having particular significance for public corporations of a service nature

- a philosophical commitment to the basic principles of federalism in the organization and administration of state school systems, a central aspect of which is a deep belief that the local school district should remain a primary unit of school government

It should be emphasized that while the cited strategies represent sound educational and administrative practices, no single set of strategies can be applied in all state school system settings. This is true because the characteristics of state school systems differ substantially in many important ways as do the needs of local school districts within the state. It follows, then, that while a consensus has emerged concerning *general* criteria for the structuring of RESAs, ultimately the development of *specific standards must be achieved on an individual state basis.*

Additionally, it should be kept in mind that certain presuppositions have guided the conceptualization of the strategies suggested in this chapter. Among these presuppositions are the following needs:

1. the need to protect the autonomy of constituent local school districts within the framework of the larger question of the state's fundamental authority over education and its responsibility to provide equal educational opportunities of high quality for all
2. the need to maximize the accountability of the regional units to their constituent districts and to the state education agency
3. the need to provide both the regional units and the state education agency with desirable and necessary programming and organizational flexibility
4. the need to establish an effective linkage system and adequate check and balance system between the three principal components of the state school system—the local school district, the regional unit, and the state education agency
5. the need to remove legal and operational constraints that inhibit closer cooperation and coordination among units of school government and between units of school government and general government and organizations in the private sector

Suggested strategies for the establishment and operation of effective regional educational service agencies[16] are grouped under seven headings: (1) establishment, (2) governance and organization, (3) service areas, (4) programs and services, (5) staffing arrangements, (6) financial structure, and (7) physical facility arrangements.

ESTABLISHMENT OF RESA UNITS

1. The state education agency should initiate a comprehensive statewide study highlighting the needs of local school districts within the state, the role and function of all existing components in the state school system, alternative approaches for the improvement of local school district delivery systems, and a specific proposal for combining contiguous local districts into areas to be served by an individual RESA unit and a specific plan for a statewide network of RESA units.
2. All information regarding the state plan should be made available in the offices of the local school district superintendents within the areas affected for a sufficient period of time prior to a public hearing called by the state education agency for the purpose of hearing testimony for and against the proposed RESA unit.
3. On completion of the public hearings, the board of the state education agency should have the authority to approve or disapprove the establishment of a RESA unit as proposed by the state education agency. Or, if the proposal has been modified following the scheduled public hearings, the board should approve or disapprove an alternative proposal submitted by representatives of a local school district.
4. The board of the state education agency should approve only those proposals submitted to it that satisfy the following criteria: (a) a public and nonpublic school enrollment in grades K-12, inclusive, sufficiently large to offer specialized programs and services efficiently and economically; (b) a financial base sufficiently large to offer specialized programs and services efficiently and economically; and (c) an area sufficiently large in terms of resources and students to offer specialized programs and services efficiently and economically.
5. Within one year of the completion of the public hearings, the board of the state education agency should submit its recommendations to the state legislature with the request that a statewide network of RESAs be mandated.
6. The enabling legislation should grant the governing board of the state education agency authority to develop departmental rules and regulations for the administration and operation of regional units.

7. The enabling legislation should specify that the state education agency conduct a comprehensive review of RESA units biannually.
8. The enabling legislation should specify that the state legislature, in cooperation with the state education agency, conduct a comprehensive review of RESA units every five years.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATION

1. RESA units should be governed by an odd-numbered board of directors (preferably 5 or 7 members) elected by popular vote within each district, plus at-large members elected by voters in the RESA. (The number of at-large members should be about half the total number of district representatives in order to maintain balance between population densities.)
2. The territory of the RESA should include contiguous districts with relatively equal populations.
3. The governing board of the RESA should be empowered to develop its rules and regulations subject to policies of the board of the state education agency and/or statutory and constitutional considerations.
4. The governing board of the RESA should have the authority to appoint a chief administrative officer for an extended period and, upon his or her recommendation, to approve the appointment of other personnel of the unit.
5. The governing board of the RESA units should be required to maintain one general advisory board composed of one representative appointed from each constituent local school district board and the chief administrative officer of each constituent district. The general advisory board should be granted statutory authority to recommend approval of the regional unit.

SERVICE AREAS

1. Each local school district in the state should be included in a RESA unit.
2. The geographic boundaries of RESA units should be such that the center or satellite center of the units is within one hour's driving time of a substantial majority of the school districts served by the unit.

3. The geographic boundaries of RESA units should adhere closely to the boundaries of other public substate regional planning and programming units.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

1. The basic program orientation of RESAs should be the provision of programs and services to constituent local school districts.
2. The governing board of the service unit should be authorized to offer any educational program or services needed by constituent local school districts, subject to the approval of the state education agency.
3. All constituent local districts should be eligible for participation in the programs and services of the regional unit.
4. The governing board of the regional unit should have the authority to enter into contractual agreements with other public and private agencies for the purpose of providing programs and services to local school districts or the RESA unit, subject to the approval of the affected constituent local districts and the state education agency.
5. The services provided by regional units for the state education agency should be limited to data-gathering functions, planning, and communicative and disseminating functions. The performance of regulatory and ministerial functions that potentially could place the unit in a severe adversary relationship with its constituent local school districts should be excluded.

STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

1. The professional staff of the unit should meet the certification standards for their specialty established by the state education agency.
2. The governing board of the unit should have the authority to employ noneducational/noncertified professional specialists, subject to the approval of the state education agency.
3. The governing board of the RESA should have authority to enter into contractual agreements with other public agencies for the joint employment of personnel, subject to the approval of the state education agency.

4. The governing board of the unit should have authority to enter into contractual agreements with private agencies for the joint employment of personnel, subject to the approval of the state education agency.

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE

1. The governing board of the RESA should be empowered to levy taxes on the taxable property of the area served, subject to the approval of the constituent local school districts and/or the state education agency.
2. The governing board of the RESA should be eligible to receive state aid on an equalization basis.
3. All federal monies going to RESA units should be approved by and channeled through the state education agency.
4. The governing board of the RESA should be eligible to make application for and expend federal aid, subject to the approval of the state education agency.
5. The governing board of the RESA unit should be eligible to receive gifts and grants and expend such gifts and grants in accordance with the terms of same so long as such terms comply with the constitution and statutes of the state and the rules and regulations of the state education agency.

PHYSICAL FACILITY ARRANGEMENTS

1. The governing board of the RESA should have the authority to incur bonded indebtedness for the purpose of acquiring physical facilities to house the programs and services of the units, subject to the approval of a simple majority of the voting residents and the state education agency.
2. The governing board of the RESA should have the authority to acquire sites and to build, alter, and repair physical facilities to house the programs and services of the unit, subject to the approval of the state education agency.
3. The governing board of the RESA should have the authority to enter into lease-purchase agreements for the purpose of acquiring physical facilities to house the programs and services of the unit, subject to the approval of the state education agency.

4. The governing board of the unit should have the authority to jointly establish a building authority with other public agencies for the purpose of securing physical facilities to house the programs and services of the unit, subject to the approval of a simple majority of voting residents and the state education agency.

5. The governing board of the RESA should be eligible to receive state appropriations for physical facility construction and maintenance.

MAINTENANCE OF OPEN SYSTEMS FOR PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING

The launching and aggressive maintenance of an *open* planning and decision-making system and parallel public information program are crucial in overcoming or minimizing many of the inherent problems associated with the RESA concept. A number of the recommended strategies for the establishment and operation of RESA units previously outlined virtually ensure that both vertical and horizontal planning, communication, and coordination occur among and between the three principal parties in the consortia—the state education agency, the constituent local school districts, and the RESA.

Particularly critical in this regard are several features of the recommended strategies relating to the financing of the regional unit and its fiscal planning and budgeting processes. The recommended strategies call for a statutorily mandated general advisory committee composed of one elected representative from each constituent local school district and the chief administrative official of each district. Furthermore, this body should hold statutory authority to approve certain provisions of the budget of the regional unit. Because the planning, implementation, and review aspects of the budget act are vital to the delicate check-and-balance scheme proposed in this report, additional comments about this central feature are offered.

In the recommended plan, the annual budget of the regional unit should be divided into three distinct categories, as shown in table 6. These categories are regulatory functions, programs and services, and general administration. The state education agency (SEA) would provide the entire source of funding for (1) both the administrative and operational costs of regulatory functions performed for the state by the regional unit and (2) the district's state-required programs and services provided by the regional unit. The state education agency would thus

TABLE 6

THE SOURCE OF FINANCING AND REQUIRED APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL COSTS OF THE VARIOUS TYPES OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF RESA UNITS

Type of Programs and Services	*Sources of Financing*	*Required Approval*
Regulatory Functions		
1. Administrative costs	SEA	SEA
2. Operational costs	SEA	SEA
Programs and Services		
1. Required of all districts		
Administrative costs	SEA	SEA
Operational costs	SEA and local tax	SEA
2. Optional for all districts		
Administrative costs	Local tax	RESA general advisory committee and RESA governing board
Operational costs	Contract with LEA	RESA general advisory committee and RESA governing board
3. Experimental programs for the state education agency or federal government		
Administrative costs	SEA and federal	SEA and RESA general advisory committee and RESA governing board
Operational costs	SEA and federal	SEA and RESA general advisory committee and RESA governing board
General Administration of the RESA	SEA	SEA and RESA general advisory committee and RESA governing board

hold final review authority for these programs and the expenditure of monies for their support.

The state would also underwrite the total general operation expenditures of the regional unit and would share the review function over general administrative costs with the RESA general advisory committee and the RESA governing board. The RESA general advisory committee would also be the recommending review body to the RESA governing board for optional programs provided by the regional unit and would share this responsibility with the state education agency regarding experimental programs being promoted in the state school system.

Regional units would also be required to develop three-year planning budgets. This time frame is essential for the optimum vertical and horizontal planning and coordination of the budgetary act among and between the three parties. It would also contribute substantially to the utilization of program budgeting and evaluation principles by all three parties.

In the judgment of this writer, the deliberate focus on the budgetary processes—complemented by other recommended features of the legislative framework under which regional units should operate—eliminates or vastly reduces a majority of the basic issues surrounding the RESA concept in most state school systems and in most settings (metropolitan or nonmetropolitan) within a state. The following illustrations are offered in support of this relatively sweeping contention:

1. It was recommended that membership on the governing board reflect both director districts and the entire region. Such representation would minimize the concern that a single member of the consortia will automatically control the decision-making processes of the unit.

2. It was recommended that the state education agency have authority to establish rules and regulations for the administration and operation of RESA units. This authority would contribute in important ways to the establishment of a meaningful external force available to both local and state educational and political decision-makers to plan, monitor, and intervene (when necessary) in the functioning of the units.

3. The recommendation also was made that a statutorily established general advisory board (composed of one representative of the board and the chief administrative official of each constituent district) have statutory authority to approve selected aspects of the RESA budget. By this means, the member districts of the consortia would have periodic, final, and

complete control over the unit, thus eliminating a majority of the concerns that the RESA unit will act unilaterally without a clear mandate from its membership.

In summary, the recommended budgetary process accomplishes a meaningful, delicate, and open check-and-balance system among and between the three principal parties in the arrangement. Dysfunctions in the arrangement can be corrected quickly. Of most importance, the accountability of all three parties is well established and visible to all.

8

CONCLUSION

Emphasized in this report are the major organizational and program patterns of one of the most popular structural approaches presently used in the nation for the improvement of educational delivery systems for elementary and secondary school-age children and youth. Also highlighted are the major problems and issues associated with the RESA concept and the effective strategies for eliminating or substantially reducing them.

The benefits of the full use of RESAs for the improvement of local school district programming and state school system operation have been documented in empirical research or supported by the judgment of close observers of school government. Of particular significance are the following benefits of RESAs:

1. They can facilitate the provision to local districts of easily accessible and definite self-determined supplemental and supportive services of high quality.
2. They can facilitate the development and/or provision of required programs and services to local districts in the event the local unit is unable to do so.
3. They can contribute substantially to the equalization of educational opportunities for all children by minimizing the accident of geography and neutralizing artificial barriers as important determinants of the kind of educational programs available.
4. They can promote the better utilization of known applications and force a systematic search for new applications of

cost-benefit/cost-effectiveness principles in the delivery of educational programs and services within the state school system.

5. They can contribute to the healthy interface between urban, suburban, and rural interests in the search for solutions to areawide educational and educationally related issues.
6. They can contribute significantly to the development of a statewide research, development, evaluation, and dissemination network in the state and promote the concentration of and best use of resources to foster the network once it is in place.
7. They can contribute significantly to the establishment of a statewide network of resident change agents possessing both authenticity in the eyes of their principal constituencies and legal mandates, where necessary; they can also more readily implement the staffing and resources necessary to effect fundamental change in the workings of the state school system on a regular and planned basis.
8. They can substantially promote meaningful local school district involvement in statewide and regional planning and decision-making processes.

NOTES

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APPENDIX

INVENTORY OF ILLUSTRATIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OFFERED BY REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES

Listed below are illustrations of programs and services, classified in five arbitrary clusters, offered by operating RESAs in the nation.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

1. Apportionment of state funds to local school districts
2. Accounting functions for local school districts (e.g., receipts, expenditures and encumbrances)
3. Auditing of local school district accounts
4. Preparation of local school district payrolls and issuance of salary warrants
5. Approval of local school district boundary changes
6. Assistance in preparation of and/or approval of local school district building programs (e.g., long-range plans, site acquisition, selection of architect, development of educational specifications, legal advice, building appraisal)
7. Completion of local school district census
8. Interpretation of federal and state legislation, and state education rules and regulations
9. Assistance in preparation of and/or approval of local school district reorganization plans
10. Assistance in school bus inspections
11. Assistance in and/or approval of bus transportation routes
12. Assistance in school lunch program planning
13. Provision of liaison functions with other governmental subdivisions
14. Provision of liaison functions with other local and regional private and quasi-private agencies
15. Administration of cooperative purchasing programs
16. Assistance to local school districts in the development of specifications for furniture and equipment
17. Provision of local school district staff certification services
18. Maintenance of teacher substitute pool

19. Provision of teacher recruitment activities
20. Coordination of joint employment of professional and support service personnel
21. Provision of consultative and advisory services (e.g., legal, federal programs, business management, policy development, salary schedule construction, public relations, publications, administrative organization, staff relations)
22. Assistance to governing boards of local school districts in the recruitment and selection of chief administrative officials
23. Provision of pupil accounting data processing services (e.g., scheduling, attendance reporting, grade reporting, test scoring)
24. Provision of administrative and financial accounting data processing services (e.g., payroll accounting, transportation scheduling, certification, statistical reporting requirements for state and local governments)

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

1. Provision of general curricula consultant services
2. Provision of specialized curricula consultant services in all fields
3. Provision of educational media services (e.g., film library, closed-circuit television, educational broadcasting, professional library, production center for the development of slides, charts, maps, study prints, models, fine art prints, printing services, tape and record library, specialized reference textbooks and materials, audiovisual repair and loan services, inservice programs for media specialists, teachers and administrators)
4. Assistance in the provision of outdoor education programs
5. Provision of remedial instructional programs and services
6. Provision of standardized intelligence, achievement and diagnostic testing programs, test scoring services, and consultant services
7. Provision of educational programs for institutionalized children
8. Planning assistance to other local agencies in the provision of educational programs for institutionalized children
9. Provision of consultant services for elementary-secondary student personnel programs (e.g., guidance programs, supportive counseling services, inservice programs for counselors, teachers and administrators, designing and conducting dropout and followup studies, career day and other orientation programs)

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

1. Assistance in and/or provision of programs for the educable mentally retarded
2. Assistance in and/or provision of programs for the trainable mentally retarded
3. Assistance in and/or provision of work-study programs for mentally handicapped
4. Assistance in and/or provision of programs for the emotionally disturbed
5. Provision of psychological and psychiatric services
6. Assistance in and/or provision of programs for the physically handicapped and for children with special health problems
7. Assistance in and/or provision of programs for exceptional children of preschool age
8. Assistance in and/or provision of instructional programs for homebound children
9. Assistance in and/or provision of programs for the gifted
10. Assistance in and/or provision of programs for the partially sighted and blind
11. Assistance in and/or provision of programs for the hard-of-hearing and deaf
12. Assistance in and/or provision of programs for the speech handicapped
13. Assistance in and/or provision of school social work services
14. Assistance in and/or provision of programs for children with specific learning disabilities

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

1. Assistance in and/or provision of administrative and business management research and development studies (e.g., administrative organization, budget analysis, cost studies, long-range financial planning, food service program, transportation program, maintenance and custodial program, long-range physical facility planning, enrollment trends and projections, staffing ratios)
2. Assistance in and/or provision of staff personnel research and development studies (e.g., salary schedules, teacher load, teacher turnover, professional negotiations)

3. Assistance in and/or provision of curriculum and instructional research and development studies (e.g., needs assessment, development of objectives, class size, pupil-teacher ratio, time allotments, teacher-made tests, grade reporting practices, pilot projects, evaluation of instructional practices, evaluation of instructional materials)
4. Provision of reviews of the literature and critiques of research and development studies on contemporary educational issues

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

1. Assistance in and/or provision of staff development programs for instructional personnel of local school districts
2. Assistance in and/or provision of staff development for noninstructional personnel of local school districts (e.g., bus drivers, cafeteria employees, secretarial personnel, custodial personnel)
3. Assistance in and/or provision of staff development programs for administrative personnel of local school districts
4. Assistance in and/or provision of inservice programs for members and officials of governing boards of local school districts